

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. - 11. cancel

12. (currently amended): Method for continuous direct casting of a metal strip according to which said strip is cast by solidification of liquid metal in an ingot mould with cooled, moving walls, said strip is then given in-line hot rolling, wherein a product is applied to the surface of the strip as it exits the ingot mould, which leaves a lubricant layer on said surface subsisting during the time the strip is hot rolled and causing release of gases contributing towards the protection of said surface from oxidation,

wherein the strip is 1-10 mm thick.

13. (previously presented): Method as in claim 12, wherein said lubricant layer is a carbonaceous material.

14. (previously presented): Method as in claim 13, wherein said product leaving a lubricant layer to subsist is graphite.

15. (previously presented): Method as in claim 13, wherein said product leaving a lubricant layer to subsist is a grease containing calcium carbonate.

16. (previously presented): Method as in claim 13, wherein said product leaving a lubricant layer to subsist is acetylene.

17. (previously presented): Method as in claim 12, wherein hot rolling is conducted with a reduction rate of at least 50%.

18. (previously presented): Method as in claim 12, wherein said liquid metal is a ferrous alloy.

19. (currently amended): Plant for the continuous direct casting of a thin metal strip, of the type comprising an ingot mould with cooled, moving walls in which solidification of said strip occurs, and an in-line hot rolling unit for said solidified strip, wherein it comprises means for applying a product to the surface of said strip as it exits the ingot mould which leaves a lubricant layer subsisting on said surface as it enters the hot rolling unit,

wherein said strip is 1-10 mm thick.

20. (previously presented): Plant as in claim 19, wherein said moving walls are the side walls of two rolls rotating in opposite directions.

21. (previously presented): Plant as in claim 19, wherein said moving walls are two moving belts.

22. (previously presented): Plant as in claim 19, comprising an inertization chamber for said strip between its exit from the ingot mould and its entry into the hot rolling unit.